

# Play Popsicle Math

Now that it's first grade, "Math Facts" are here. This year, you can expect addition and some subtraction; then, when your child hits second grade, get ready for timed tests and even early explorations in multiplication and division. Worried? Don't be. This is a time to be excited with your child about this new knowledge, and to explore lots of fun ways to develop it. Here's a hands-on activity that classroom teachers use to help kids get a feel for equations and start building lifelong skills.

## What You Need:

- 23 popsicle sticks
- kitchen timer
- crayons or markers
- construction paper
- child safety scissors
- 2 Ziploc bags



## What You Do:

**Label Sticks.** Have your child hold each stick vertically and label it with one number, going from 1-20. Use the remaining three sticks to write a plus, minus, and equals sign (+, -, =) using crayons or markers.

**Build an equation.** Start with addition. Help your child make problems by using the popsicle sticks and having her hold up the answers. ( Ex.  $1+1=2$ ,  $1+2=3$ ,  $1+3=4$ , etc.) Later, using the same popsicle sticks she already labeled, you can have your child practice making subtraction facts and holding up the answers.

**If you like, add a challenge.** Set a kitchen timer, for example, and see if your child can answer each problem correctly in three seconds or less. Or have your child write a list of problems and keep a "scorecard" of correct equations which you can mark with a happy face or star.

Moving forward, you can also extend the activity by having your child make flashcards using construction paper, child safety scissors, and crayons or markers. She should write one number per card, and make separate cards for plus, minus, and equals signs. Then, she can make addition and subtraction problems using the cards and holding up the answers the same way she did with the popsicle sticks. When you're done, you can save both the popsicle sticks and the flashcards in ziploc bags—they're a great game to pull out over snacks, in the car, or even when you're sitting in the dentist office.

Math is all around us; and with your help, it will be safely inside your kid's head for the long haul, too.

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